



California State Fire Marshal **CODE INTERPRETATION**

Date Issued	10-21-03	Interpretation #	03-041
Topic	Smoke Alarms/Detectors in Group R, Division 3 Occupancies		
Code Section(s)	§2-3.5.1, NFPA 72 (1999 ed)		
Requested by	Thomas W. Smithey, Sr Building Inspector Contra Costa County Building Department 651 Pine St., 3 rd Floor, North Wing Martinez, CA 94553-1295		

What is the clearance required between smoke alarms (and smoke detectors) and return air grills in Group R, Division 3 occupancies?

The minimum required clearance is three feet. §2-3.5.1 states that smoke detectors shall not be located where airflow prevents operation of the units. Appendix §A-2.3.5.1. recommends that smoke detectors not be located in direct airflow or closer than three feet from an air supply diffuser or return air openings. However, the commentary on Section A-2.3.5.1 found in the 1999 edition of the National Fire Alarm Code Handbook states that there may be circumstances where a separation of three feet is not adequate and a greater separation is required depending upon the HVC velocity and type of diffusers.